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ABSTRACT

This document is a guide for managers and curriculum leaders of adult and community learning (ACE) programs in the United Kingdom who need to take a strategic approach to their program's curriculum and build internal organization and partnerships. The introduction discusses the aims and components of the overlapping strands of ACE provision (broad open-access curriculum, national priority provision, and community development/community capacity building) and lists factors driving curriculum change. The following topics are among those discussed in the guide's seven sections: (1) taking a strategic approach to developing a curriculum that provides adults with a full range of learning opportunities and implementing strategies for curriculum improvement; (2) supporting and developing staff; (3) developing a learner-led curriculum; (4) supporting learners; (5) widening participation; (6) building the curriculum (bringing in new learners, learner pathways and progression, moving on and staying put, planning for progression, facilitating progression, and working with levels); and (7) understanding the range of approaches to curriculum leadership. A discussion of curriculum leadership and the Common Inspection Framework is appended, along with the North East Lincolnshire Community Learning Service Area of Learning file. Case studies, staff development exercises, a checklist for curriculum leaders, a 35-item bibliography, and list of 7 World Wide Web sites are included. (MN)

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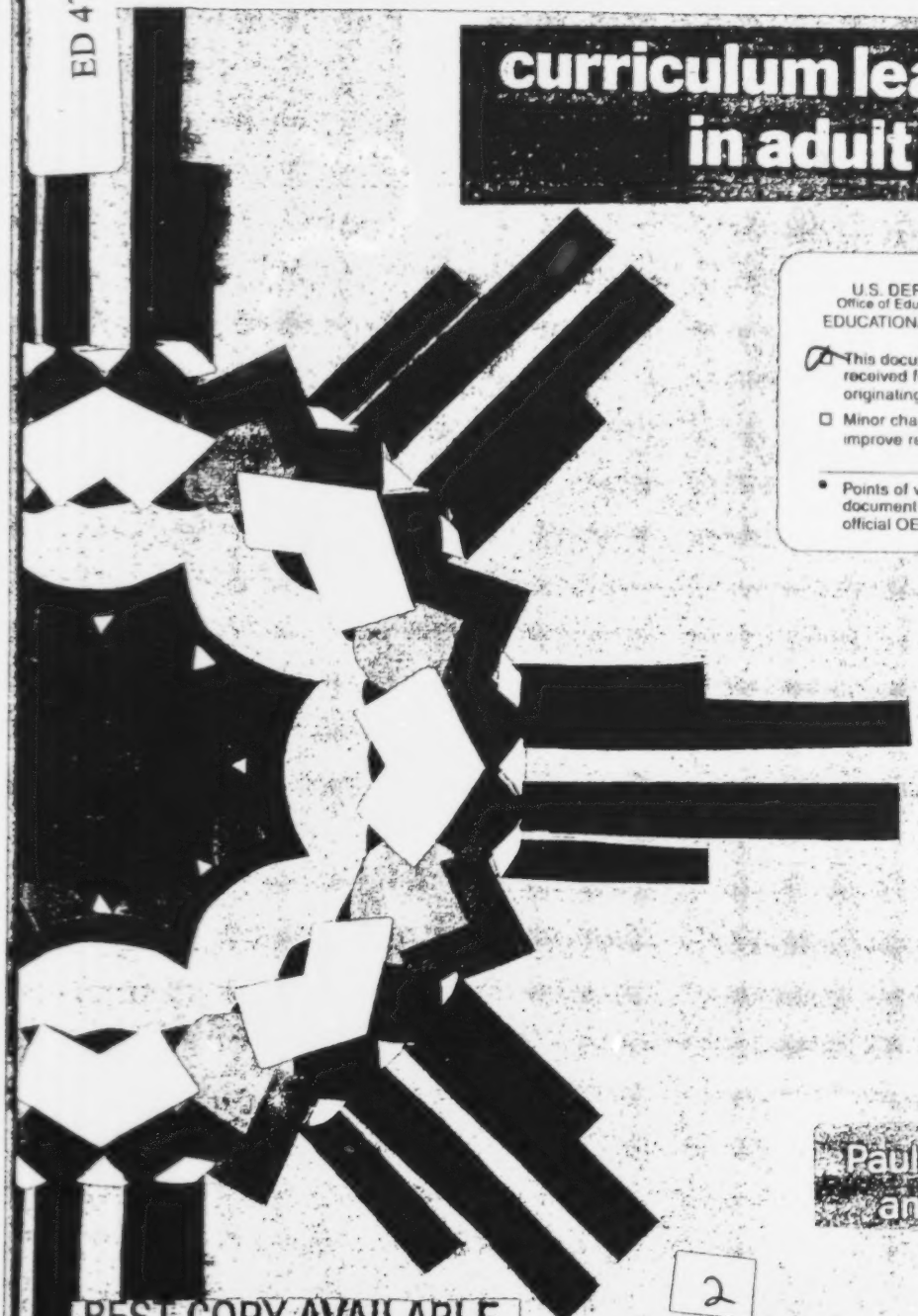

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adult and community learning
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The Adult and Community Learning Quality Support Programme is a 3-year programme to support ACL providers to meet quality requirements of inspection and funding agencies and improve their provision. It is run by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in partnership with the National Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE) and is funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Details of the programme, extra copies of this guide and back-up materials are available on the website www.qualityACL.org.uk

These guides are currently available:

- *Equality and diversity in adult and community learning: a guide for managers*
- *Fit for purpose: self-assessment for small providers*
- *Involving tutors and support staff in the adult and community learning quality agenda*
- *Learning in progress: recognising achievement in adult learning*
- *Listening to learners*
- *Observation of teaching and learning in adult education: how to prepare for it, how to do it and how to manage it*
- *Self-assessment and development planning for adult and community learning providers*
- *Using quality schemes in adult and community learning: a guide for managers.*

Further guides and workshops are planned on:

- leadership and management in adult and community learning
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- staff development for quality.

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Introduction

A new programme every year; new courses starting every few weeks – it's exciting in adult and community learning (ACL): fertile, varied and very exposed to the uncertainties of the market. A glance through prospectuses from different parts of the country shows, too, how some providers offer the widest range of subjects they can to meet the needs and interests of individuals while others focus on particular community needs and priorities. How are decisions taken about what the curriculum should be, and how is it reviewed and developed?

Who are the curriculum leaders? Management arrangements may relate to geographical areas, where managers support and oversee the work of tutors in all curriculum areas. In some cases there are senior managers for curriculum and quality. Often, very few full-time or fractional staff are responsible for large numbers of part-time tutors. Finding the resources for curriculum leadership, creating posts or finding tutors or development workers who are unacknowledged leaders and developing their roles are increasingly seen as key ways of improving the quality of learning programmes.

Leadership does not only come from staff. There are strong democratic traditions in adult education and the focus on inclusion has strengthened the view that the curriculum should be shaped by learners and local communities. Part of the role of the curriculum leader is to facilitate the development of a learner-led curriculum.

Curriculum leaders in ACL face particular challenges. Often learning programmes are dispersed in order to make them accessible and this strength may be offset by weaknesses associated with the isolation of tutors and groups. The curriculum leaders' task is to protect flexibility of the provision and create networks and structures within it.

The learner can then be seen at the centre of a kaleidoscope curriculum where the brightly coloured components can come together in a variety of meaningful patterns to meet individual and group needs.

This guide looks at the part curriculum leadership can play in developing and delivering high quality learning programmes which match the needs and interests of local adults, engage the excluded, and provide pathways for progression. While particular attention is paid to provision by local education authorities (LEAs), curriculum leadership is considered within the broader context of adult learning.

The guide provides staff development exercises within the chapters as well as discussion, and the main text is followed by a checklist for curriculum leaders, which provides a practical way for you to assess your organisation's current position and future plans for curriculum leadership.

The ACL curriculum: patterns and challenges

The range of provision varies widely from place to place. It reflects local priorities over time, differing structures, and very different levels of establishment and resourcing. LEAs manage their provision directly and provide ACL through contracts with a wide range of providers. Local needs and policies combined with the enthusiasms of individuals and organisations have influenced its creation. Work in priority curriculum areas has grown in response to government initiatives and funding opportunities. However, innovative work in priority areas has often developed in isolation from the rest of the provision and so limited the benefits to the curriculum as a whole.

While ACL provision usually includes a range of qualifications selected to facilitate academic and vocational progression, much is non-accredited. The mix should reflect the provider's mission. Without vocational elements and qualifications, including 'tailor-made' qualifications designed for adult learners and qualifications in the national qualifications framework (NQF), recruitment would be narrower and the opportunity to develop progression routes that work for the learners would be limited. Informal learning is important too. It can be helpful to think of three main strands of provision, all interlinked and overlapping.

The broad open-access curriculum

This provides a wide range of publicly advertised learning opportunities offering multiple entry points for individuals within the area it serves. It is subject focused and likely to include academic, vocational, general interest and personal development programmes. It may include courses for which entry is by interview. Where there is selection it is usually on the basis of whether the programme is right for the learner rather than formal entrance requirements.

National priority provision

This aims to widen participation, meet the needs of disadvantaged learners and overcome factors which cause exclusion. It focuses on:

- priority curriculum areas (basic skills, ESOL, ICT, entry and foundation level, 'first rung' provision)
- priority learners (targeted provision for disadvantaged or excluded groups including adults with learning difficulties or disabilities)
- priority contexts (disadvantaged wards, provision outside educational buildings, outreach, community and workplace learning opportunities).

Community development / community capacity building

This aims to facilitate and support provision developed by, with and for a wide range of communities, agencies or groups. It can include the development of infrastructure to support the delivery of learning opportunities and build the capacity of organisations to deliver learning.

All three strands may include:

- part-time provision, during the day, evening and weekend
- some full-time provision
- multi-site delivery
- a variety of learning modes
- tailor-made provision, some of which offers qualifications outside the NQF
- qualifications in the NQF
- vocational learning opportunities

- curriculum developed with and for identified groups and through local partnerships
- provision taken or made accessible to vulnerable groups
- provision in community, workplace and other sites
- recognition and support of learning in a wide range of activities and roles
- family learning and a range of community learning activities.

The extent to which these kinds of provision overlap and interlink will vary. Effective curriculum leaders work across the boundaries to maximise expertise and resources rather than keeping them tied up in the areas in which they developed.

The curriculum agenda

Challenges in curriculum development include balancing the requirement to identify and respond to community needs and interests across urban and rural areas with the need to develop and update subject expertise and raise standards in areas of learning.

Factors driving curriculum change are:

- the inclusion and widening participation agendas
- changes in demography and economic and social contexts
- the role of local Learning and Skills Councils in reviewing and planning provision
- the requirement for self-assessment across areas of learning
- the Common Inspection Framework (CIF)
- messages from pilot and first-round inspections by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)
- new technologies.

Inadequate curriculum management and development was identified as a key issue in the report on the pilot inspections (ALI 2002a, p12). Inspectors found 'too few mechanisms to offer support for tutors or review the whole provision in wide areas of provision'. The challenge to curriculum leaders is to work on both the big picture (ie 'review the whole') and provide specific support for tutors as team members and as individuals. See Appendix 1, 'Curriculum leadership and the Common Inspection Framework'.

Reviewing the provision as a whole includes looking not only at the current offer but also at the learners and potential learners; the needs of 'individuals, families and communities' (CIF question 1). The CIF asks 'How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?' and the ALI *Guidance* (2002b, p17) adds:

Providers use appropriate methods for identifying the learning needs and interests of potential adult learners as well as those who have been in learning for some time.

So, the responsive curriculum is based on needs analysis and consultation, both within and outside provision, as well as on effective and creative approaches to developing the provision. Priority learners do not necessarily want, or come forward for, the priority curriculum. Learners with few qualifications are spread throughout the broad open access provision where they study alongside more highly qualified learners. How to identify them and provide guidance, support and progression possibilities for them is a major challenge to curriculum leaders.

Staff development exercise

What happens now?

For managers, curriculum leaders and team leaders

Aim To consider the extent to which common principles and procedures are applied in planning the curriculum in different kinds of provision.

How does your service, organisation, area of learning or programme team:

1. Analyse needs and carry out market research.
2. Plan the curriculum offer.
3. Plan to support learners on the programmes.

Enter areas of your provision under the three headings and then summarise what happens in relation to functions 1–3 for each. (The headings may not all be relevant to your work and they overlap. If you are uncertain where to put an area of work, just make a quick choice.)

Applying common principles and procedures

	Broad open-access curriculum	**National priority provision**	**Community development/ community capacity building**
Our provision			
1 Analyse needs and carry out market research			
2 Plan the curriculum offer			
3 Plan to support learners on the programmes			

Taking it forward: a strategic approach

What should be available to adults within the area an LEA or provider serves?

Access to the full range of learning opportunities might include:

- a rich part-time offer including accredited and non-accredited programmes and learning for cultural, citizenship and recreational reasons
- a wide range of vocational training
- access to further and higher education
- second chance and return to learning programmes
- basic skills, ESOL and ICT
- opportunities and support for active engagement in the community.

Making this available depends on:

- demographic knowledge and understanding of the local context
- needs analysis and mapping of provision
- information and communication
- effective partnerships and networking
- comprehensive advice and guidance
- the inputs of many providers.

Focusing on what is available in an area encourages us to think of an 'entitlement curriculum' for adults rather than focusing narrowly on priorities in a way which may itself become excluding. Only the concerted efforts of learning providers and information, advice and guidance services can make it possible. Eldwick Research Associates (2001) give as their first key point about ACL:

Excellence in ACL ... engages creatively with groups and individuals and meets them on their own terms and in their own territory.

It is this quality that can give ACL a key role in providing both initial access and continuing learning opportunities. It can offer a variety of responses to meet the needs of a diverse society, including accredited and non-accredited provision. It can offer multiple starting points and learning opportunities from basic skills to professional level. But it does not operate in a vacuum and it cannot provide the full range of opportunities. Strategic curriculum planning takes account of needs, opportunities and 'what we do best'. For an example of effective collaboration to improve the offer to learners see 'IT arose from altruism' (Farmer 2002, pp8–9).

Curriculum leadership and development can, therefore, be most effective where the big picture is understood and there is a strategic approach to planning, not only at policy-makers' level but also on the part of those who design programmes, support tutors or recruit learners. The impact of excellent programmes and initiatives is undermined where providers and staff do not know what each other are doing and lack information about other local provision.

Curriculum leadership takes as its starting point the strategic goals and vision of the organisation and translates them into practice in all areas of work and disciplines, wins support for them from staff, partners, volunteers and learners, and brings them to fruition. This means developing the organisation's capacity but also keeping communities and learners at the heart of curriculum design.

Strategies for curriculum improvement

Approaches will vary depending on the structure of the service and its staffing, but will include:

- a phased review process, carried out by curriculum area and locality
- identification of staff to be responsible for and lead on the curriculum
- a curriculum focus within the observation of teaching and learning framework
- staff development on teaching and learning strategies
- setting up tutor support networks
- ensuring equality and diversity in curriculum design
- opportunities for subject and professional updating
- developing new programmes
- developing progression routes internally and with other providers
- review of the balance of accredited, non-accredited and qualification-bearing courses and the appropriateness of qualifications and accreditation
- improvement of analysis and use of data on participation, retention, achievement and progression
- opportunities for exchange of practice between different curriculum areas.

The following case studies show how curriculum leadership is being developed in very different contexts. In Sunderland the approach has been to find and develop leaders within voluntary and community organisations which are contracted to provide ACL. In Stockport, where there is more central staffing, newly appointed curriculum leaders have led the approach. For an example from North East Lincolnshire of an Area of Learning file for curriculum leaders, see Appendix 2.

Case study Sunderland Learning Partnership

Developing curriculum leadership where ACL is delivered mainly through voluntary and community organisations.

Sunderland LEA contracts out all its ACL provision. The provision targets reluctant learners and disadvantaged communities and most is delivered by voluntary and community organisations.

In the academic year 2001/02, the ACL team in Sunderland concentrated on the requirements of the CIF. A limited programme of observation of teaching and learning was extended, course files were introduced, a central management information system was soon to be installed and the LEA put in place a means by which it could lead on curriculum support and development.

There were obstacles to establishing this LEA lead role in curriculum support and development. Curriculum delivery had always been the responsibility of the contractor. The LEA ACL team is small and there was neither the resource nor the expertise in the range of curriculum areas. Most providers served a particular community, so a number of organisations offered the same subjects in different localities. Contractors were unused to collaborating on curriculum delivery and unfamiliar with the CIF '14 areas of learning'.

For Sunderland, the approach was through partnership. The experience and expertise of contractors in the voluntary sector provided a way forward. Their contracts require each to support a curriculum area and they identified 'curriculum leaders' from their staff with the skills and personal qualities to work, on behalf of the LEA, across the city. In their area of curriculum expertise they would be responsible for carrying out a tutor and resource audit and for establishing a curriculum focus group. Nominating organisations would be recompensed for this input. A project development officer from the ACL team would lead a support group for curriculum leaders.

Following mapping of provision, curriculum leaders took responsibility for Basic Skills and ESOL, Health and Beauty, Sport, Visual Arts and ICT. The target in the development plan for 2002/03 was to establish six curriculum groups and this will be met. A start has been made and there is a working model to replicate in other curriculum areas.

Case study ## Stockport Continuing Education Service

An ACL QSP Development Project 2001/02

The project aimed to create a framework for collaborative strategic curriculum planning which would involve tutors as well as managers.

Stockport Continuing Education Service is a mixed direct delivery / subcontracting service. The head of service and a team of five senior managers manage the service centrally. Each adult education centre is directly managed by a principal / manager and over 220 part-time tutors deliver the programme. In January 2001 a senior manager responsible for quality, curriculum and staff development was appointed and the following gaps were identified in relation to curriculum development:

- no named staff with responsibility for curriculum leadership / management other than in basic skills / ESOL
- no framework for strategic curriculum planning
- insufficient and unclear progression opportunities for learners
- lack of opportunities for curriculum staff to pool resources, share good practice and develop new provision
- inconsistent approach to communicating with, and involving, part-time staff in service developments / improvements.

As a result of this a team of curriculum leaders was appointed to lead and manage curriculum across the service. Self-assessment became a 'key driver' and was carried out by areas of learning and by centre. The aim was to improve the service by creating a framework to:

- ensure a strategic approach to curriculum development
- involve tutors and managers in the process
- share good practice
- identify and provide appropriate support for staff
- address key issues identified in the self-assessment report.

Principles were agreed for the strategic curriculum planning process and standard documentation based on the City of York Adult Education Service materials was produced. Engaging tutors in the curriculum planning process was central but there was also clear direction and communication coming from 'the top'.

The process

Senior management support was essential as curriculum leaders and centre managers are line-managed by various members of the senior management team. The Service had been managed geographically and responsibility for the curriculum had to shift from centre managers to the curriculum leaders. This evolved over the lifetime of the project and some centre managers found it more difficult to 'let go' than others.

Working with the FE and sixth form colleges

ACL provision is delivered in four local colleges and, while all provided data and quality assurance information to the LEA, until the start of the project they operated in isolation and planned their own provision. Service-level agreements were revised to bring college provision into service-wide strategic planning and there was agreement to work together to raise quality, for example on the observation of teaching and learning.

Staff development / team development

There were staff development sessions for tutors and managers and tutors' skills were used to share their good practice. Tutors could seek support from the curriculum leaders and from a tutor mentor who provides 1:1 or small group support. A comprehensive communication strategy supported change and helped overcome resistance. Changes were made incrementally and positive feedback at each stage highlighted how the improvements would make a difference.

Outcomes

There has been a noticeable shift from a centre-based approach to a more strategic 'whole-service' approach and Stockport has:

- developed a rationale for the curriculum planning process
- introduced common systems and documentation
- approved the format for a Curriculum Forum
- improved course information.

Curriculum leadership has won support from staff and partners. Major unexpected outcomes have been:

- positive feedback from staff who have had the opportunity to work together
- tutors gaining in confidence and applying for service management posts
- staff requesting more curriculum planning meetings
- the willingness of college colleagues to work together on strategic curriculum planning
- staff optimism and the 'feel good' factor – many say learners are now offered a better service.

Supporting and developing staff

Providing support for staff at all levels is a powerful way of improving the learner's experience and maximising the creativity of staff. The relationship between the learner and the tutor is critical in helping the learner achieve and progress and it is often the tutor who provides progression advice. This means that the involvement of the tutor with the service or provider is also important. Do tutors feel that they benefit from working with colleagues and from support and resources offered? Do they see themselves as contributing to a staff team and a wider programme of learning, or as a freelance agents, providing classes, possibly for a number of providers, who may have loyalty to the learners but very limited contact with and therefore attachment to the service?

Staff development for curriculum building is important both initially, to win support and understanding, and on an ongoing basis. It fosters understanding about aims, similarities and differences within the provision. It may address whole-service issues such as equality and diversity in curriculum design, focus on an area of learning or relate to the development of individuals or small groups. Staff development and training in ACL has traditionally been on principles and practice that apply in all disciplines. Tutors welcome a focus on the curriculum and on their subjects.

Staff development can help:

- develop a service-wide sense of identity
- build teams in curriculum areas to increase and update subject expertise and resources
- develop leaders from among the tutors
- engage tutors in curriculum development within a framework of agreed principles, procedures and design features

- increase tutors' knowledge of the curriculum and help them advise learners on next steps or refer them to the right people for advice and guidance
- increase and update subject expertise
- build links between learning support staff and tutors in all areas of learning
- develop use of information and learning technology across the curriculum.

Staff development exercise

Matching needs with support

For managers and curriculum leaders

Aim To identify staff support development needs and match them with appropriate forms of training and support.

1 Make a list of your staff development and support needs in relation to curriculum development and areas of learning.

2 Bearing in mind where staff are based, decide which could most usefully be met by:

- whole organisation training events
- curriculum team events
- mentoring or informal individual or small group support
- a handbook or materials, CD-ROM or online support, an e-circle.

The learner-led curriculum

It is possible to think of a curriculum continuum, with provider-led learning at one end and learner-led provision at the other.

Provider-led ——————————————— **Learner-led**

Draw a circle on the line to show where you think your organisation, area of learning or learning programme is on this line. Do you engage learners in planning as well as evaluating the curriculum and, if so, how? For a structured and strategic approach to this see 'Grouping and prioritising' in Ravenhall (2001, pp13–14).

Learners' purposes do not necessarily match those of providers. They may develop new and high order skills to support their community or family roles. In this they are determining their own curriculum but there can be a role for a provider in identifying and validating this learning. Equally they may engage in substantial learning, as in the science course described in the case study below, but think of the activity as 'leisure'. Even so these learners recalled negative experiences and feelings about science, and the desire to overcome them may have been a motivating force.

Case study

Science and the learner-led curriculum at The City Literary Institute (The City Lit)

Is there a lack of interest in science or are people put off by the way it is taught? An experimental course at The City Lit, London, took the idea of the learner-led curriculum seriously and let learners' ideas and questions determine content.

At the first session learners discussed the method, got to know one another and asked questions and agreed topics. Ideas flowed and the group revealed negative perceptions about their formal education in science. They felt the subject to be intimidating, irrelevant and obscure. Despite finding it strange, they took to the task posing questions about flying, the stability of buildings, the weather and environment, DNA, genetics, relativity and the quantum theory.

Letting the learners set the agenda meant that the tutor didn't have to be an expert on everything that came up but had a role to play in linking questions and drawing out themes. The first discussions, about how and why things move, led into concepts about the motion of cars, rockets, planes and people. The second, about what things are made of, explored the relative scale of things from universes to atoms, raising questions about the meaning of truth in the context of models of atoms and the search for the ultimate components of matter. The third phase tackled relativity theory.

The development of trust came first and the course focus was on ideas rather than facts, laws or equations. Not only learners' questions but also their experience and pre-existing notions, perhaps unrecognised and unvalued, formed starting points. Questions and assertions were faithfully summarised on flipcharts each week and discussed at the beginning of the next week to consolidate learning. When asked, following a classroom observation, whether they would value more formal assessment the learners adamantly opposed the idea.

See Morris's (2002) 'Lessons don't have to be rocket science' for further information on this experimental course.

Staff development exercise

How do learners shape the curriculum?

For managers, curriculum leaders and tutors

Aim To review the extent to which learners and potential learners contribute to curriculum development, raise awareness about role expectations and discuss possibilities for greater learner involvement in leading the curriculum.

How do learners, non-learners and communities contribute to curriculum development in your organisation or service? Complete the table.

Task sheet

Focus	Issue	Response
The whole curriculum	How do learners, non-learners and community groups influence strategy and planning?	
The area of learning	How do learners contribute to interdisciplinary and subject developments?	
Programme / course plan	How do learners contribute to planning and content before and on the learning programme?	
Programme / course delivery	How do learners contribute to session planning and delivery?	

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Supporting learners

Effective curriculum leadership supports adult learners, as we have seen, by giving them a role in determining their learning and building on their strengths. It is also part of the curriculum development function to identify the basic skills that are needed for success in any programme and have strategies for giving support to learners who will not have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential without it. Providers have developed expertise in supporting learners in the priority curriculum areas and curriculum leadership posts are often in basic skills, ESOL, or supporting adults with learning difficulties or disabilities. Curriculum leaders need to harness the skills and experience of these staff to contribute to curriculum design and staff development to raise tutors' awareness and ability to identify and respond to needs as they emerge in all areas of learning.

Whatever aspect of the curriculum they choose to access, without appropriate support newly engaged, reluctant or disadvantaged learners may not stay and achieve. This negates the energy and effort made to widen participation and may reinforce perceptions that learning is for other people.

Examples of learning support include:

- clear and accessible information in a variety of media
- initial guidance and assessment
- strategies to identify and support learners at risk of dropping out
- intervention strategies where learners are not making progress
- tutorial arrangements for learners
- basic skills and ESOL
- study skills
- additional learning support
- support for specific difficulties or disabilities
- assistance with transitions between learning programmes / providers.

Case study Additional Learning Support (ALS) in Hounslow Adult Education Service

As in many adult education services, ALS funding was not used at all in Hounslow until May 2001. The consequence was that there were very few learners with learning or other disabilities able to access and succeed in the provision. ALS funding was introduced as part of a development project for adults recovering from mental illness. This began with 4-week summer non-accredited courses that prepared learners for qualification courses for which LSC would fund support.

The project aimed to build confidence together with social and study skills to help learners achieve qualifications, and to encourage progression and increase employment opportunities. A secondary purpose of the project was setting up systems for the delivery and monitoring of ALS and the recruitment and training of staff to provide it.

Learning support assistants (LSAs) were recruited through the learners' termly news-sheet, and trained. Referrals for support came from tutors, administrative staff at centres and learners – the latter often people with basic skills needs. A system of ticking a box on an enrolment form if you needed support did not produce referrals.

An appointments system for individual assessments was set up and, if appropriate, basic skills tests or the dyslexia adult screening test were used. Support was arranged where necessary and, in most cases (71%), a learning support assistant was provided. The support assistant was put in touch with the learner and the course tutor to arrange individually tailored help. In most cases the support took place during the class.

By the end of 6 months, 30 learners had received or were receiving LSC fundable support. Retention has been good and evaluations have been very positive. At the time of reporting 7 of the 10 learners who had completed had gained the qualification.

Key points

- Course tutors needed clarification about the role of additional support and when learners are eligible to receive it.
- Monitoring and supporting the process is time-consuming. Each case is individually arranged and some learners have recurring health problems which can make attendance difficult.
- A resource bank including IT access is now needed for learners who may have mobility and sensory impairment to use.
- More effective ways of identifying learners with basic skills needs are required.
- Recruitment, training and support for LSAs is crucial.

Until the start of this project, the lack of a formal system of support for students with learning or other disabilities in Hounslow Adult Education suppressed demand. Some help was given informally. But it must be assumed that some learners with disabilities were unwilling or unable to embark on a course without support or found that they could not continue. Now that there is a supply of support, the demand is increasing. Referrals are coming, not only from learners and potential learners, but also from other Education Service staff, primary school staff and Social Services team members.

Staff development exercise

Anticipating support needs

For curriculum leaders and tutors

Aim To raise awareness of implicit requirements for success on learning programmes.

Choose a learning programme and look carefully at:

- the course description
- the learning materials and planned activities for a single session.

1 Write down the skills you think a learner would need on the basis of the course description.

2 Look at the learning materials and activities and list the skills involved in taking a full part in it.

3 Are there any implications for recruitment, course design or support needs?

Widening participation

How can the curriculum be made more attractive, accessible and relevant to the needs of potential learners? A key government priority is to widen participation in learning for the benefit of individuals, families, communities and the economy. To do this providers will need to create an inclusive curriculum embracing a range of subject and skill areas. Three key principles underpin efforts to achieve this aim. They are:

- accessibility – geographical and in other senses of the term
- equality of opportunity – positive action to address barriers and improve access
- affordability – no cost or low cost where necessary.

Lessons have been learned about barriers to participation created by learning providers – the 'supply side', and barriers arising from learners' experiences, attitudes and feelings – the 'demand side'. To tackle 'supply side' barriers curriculum leaders need to:

- ensure more equitable access to learning opportunities
- promote equality of opportunity and meet diverse needs
- make widening participation part of the core work rather than something which is added on
- avoid using negative terms ('non-standard' or 'non-traditional' learners, labelling people as 'non-learners' rather than 'potential learners')
- link innovative and outreach provision into all support mechanisms and learning pathways.

How can curriculum leaders overcome 'demand side' barriers?

Practical barriers and barriers caused by feelings and attitudes, which are difficult to change, deter learners. These include:

- poor prior educational attainment (if at first you don't succeed, you don't succeed), negative perceptions of schooling and scepticism about the value of learning
- low self-esteem, lack of confidence in general and in relation to learning
- lack of an 'educational self-concept' – learning is not for 'the likes of us'
- low aspirations and lack of role models in the family or community
- seeing learning as 'risky' and a threat to the status quo
- resistance to change
- lack of trust in 'officialdom' and formal institutions or organisations.

Providers who are likely to be successful are those for whom widening participation is genuinely part of their vision and mission, who make a long-term commitment which includes a strategic approach, sustained investment and a properly resourced development plan. The strategy is likely to include five key aspects:

- purposeful engagement with communities
- changes to the curriculum portfolio, curriculum design and delivery
- seeing support for learners as an entitlement not an optional extra
- commitment to quality assurance and improvement
- a willingness and ability to work in partnership to good effect.

Engagement with communities

Engaging with communities on a sustained basis is essential. The emphasis on 'project' funding for initiatives to reach and engage new learners has not always helped to achieve this. Establishing trust and productive relationships with people and groups in particular neighbourhoods and communities takes time, and is labour intensive and costly. There are potentially beneficial outcomes in terms of developing skills and building capacity within communities.

Necessary activities for curriculum leaders to engage with communities include:

- having a presence on the ground and dealing with people face to face
- ensuring development workers have essential skills, tenacity and diplomacy
- identifying known and trusted local people willing to act as intermediaries
- listening – keeping ears and eyes open and seeking out opportunities
- being aware of local activities and agendas that could be linked to learning
- using word of mouth to give information and encourage participation
- supporting and developing local 'learning champions'
- involving local people and groups in action research or advocacy work
- locating and using local premises which are accessible and welcoming.

Curriculum portfolio, design and delivery

Establishing a genuine dialogue and working partnership with people in local communities comes first. Once there is a willingness to engage, the response must be prompt, of good quality and take account of learners' purposes.

A focus on the needs of particular groups in specific contexts (eg through family learning programmes, workplace initiatives, working with a housing association, tenants' association or a voluntary group) can be very effective.

As well as representatives of targeted groups, community organisers, guidance workers, and professionals working within communities such as health visitors, playgroup leaders or employers can help in identifying local learning needs and contribute suggestions as to how these can best be met.

Courses or activities?

While the tendency is to think about 'courses', people may first be attracted back into learning through community activity initiated and / or supported by community development workers. Engagement in activity which is not viewed as 'learning' can lead to interest in acquiring new skills or knowledge. 'Bite size' courses can then give access to more substantial learning opportunities. Examples of such practical projects are:

- refurbishing and decorating a community centre
- working with a community artist to create a mosaic in a play area
- wanting to create a community archive and use specially created software.

Within the offer, curriculum leaders need to make links between formal, informal and non-formal learning. Informal learning takes place when people develop the knowledge and skills they need to carry out roles and pursue their interests. The curriculum may be altogether shaped by the learners although learning is not their main purpose. Planners and tutors can help learners identify and build on these achievements and help groups develop 'intentional' learning.

The Commission of the European Communities in its communication *Making a European Area of Lifelong Learning a reality* (2001, p10) identified the need to recognise the value of all learning, whether formal, informal or non-formal, and to include all learning within the concept of 'lifelong learning'.

The distinction between these types of learning relates to 'intentionality'. This can be represented, without implying a hierarchical value relationship, as follows:

Figure 1 Dimensions of learning

	Intentional	Structured	Accredited
Formal	✓	✓	✓
Non-formal	✓	✓	✗
Informal	✗	✗	✗

For activity to become 'learning-ful' four factors are important. These are:

- awareness of the potential for learning within the activity on the part of curriculum designers, tutors and learners
- motivation to learn (intentionality)
- self-awareness and reflection so that learning is recognised and evaluated
- support for this process and confirmation of learning from an informed source.

Recruiting and training staff

Tutors and volunteers delivering 'inclusive' provision will need to take account of learners' existing skills and life experience, differing learning styles and levels of confidence. Where possible tutors and support staff should have some characteristics in common with the client group, in terms of gender, ethnicity or experience. There are benefits for the provider and in terms of capacity building in 'growing your own' outreach staff by training volunteers or encouraging ex-students to become volunteers or intermediaries and then undertake tutor training.

Commitment to quality assurance and improvement

Curriculum leaders will need to ensure that quality assurance processes are applied in all locations and to all activities, adapting them for use in the various contexts. For discussion of self-assessment for small organisations see Ravenhall *et al.* (2002a) and to look at the links between the CIF and PQASSO, a framework used by some community and voluntary organisations, see Ewens and Watters (2002).

Expectations on the part of tutors and learners must not be lower for some groups than for others. While there may be necessary compromises in terms of locality and suitability of accommodation for learning, resources and materials must be age appropriate and of suitable quality. Learners in outreach locations deserve equity of treatment.

Working in partnership: a challenge for curriculum leaders

'Partnership' is essential if we are to reach out to new learners. Partnerships may range from formal strategic 'learning partnerships' or partnerships in neighbourhood renewal, to local partnerships established to deliver community projects.

People can be drawn into learning through their allegiances, passions and commitments. There is huge potential for stimulating demand for learning through partnerships with existing groups, organisations and forms of enterprise where people are already volunteering and practising active citizenship. These include:

- faith communities and voluntary organisations
- cooperatives, mutual societies and social enterprises
- trade unions
- women's organisations
- tenants' and residents' associations
- environmental groups.

Staff development exercise

Benchmarking for community participation

For managers, curriculum leaders and team leaders

Aim To assess current strategies and practice against benchmarks.

Yorkshire Forward (the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Development Agency) has proposed a set of benchmarks to inform the development and evaluation of strategies for community participation in regeneration. These are linked to four dimensions – influence, inclusivity, communication and capacity.

Consider the benchmarks from the perspective of your service or organisation and note key considerations that apply to your work or role(s).

Staff development exercise continued

Task sheet

Benchmarks	Key considerations
Influence	
The community is recognised as an equal partner at all stages of the process	
There is meaningful representation on all decision-making bodies from initiation	
All community members have the opportunity to participate	
Communities have access to and control over resources	
Evaluation of regeneration partnerships incorporates a community agenda	
Inclusivity	
The diversity of local communities and interests are reflected at all levels of the regeneration process	
Equal opportunities policies are in place and implemented	
Unpaid workers / volunteer activists are valued	
Communication	
A two-way information strategy is developed and implemented	
Programme and project procedures are clear and accessible	
Capacity	
Communities are resourced to participate	
Understanding, knowledge and skills are developed to support partnership working	

Yorkshire Forward (2001)

Staff development exercise

Anticipating challenges and being ready to respond: questions to discuss

For managers and curriculum leaders

Aim To help managers and teams anticipate challenges which can arise in community-based developments and devise strategies for responding to them.

1 What tensions for people operating in curriculum leadership roles, can arise from the need to widen participation and build capacity within communities?

Examples of the latter could include:

- needing to meet overall targets for learner numbers while seeking to engage 'harder-to reach' new learners
- wanting to meet demand in neighbourhoods where there is little suitable accommodation
- recognising the importance of consultation but wanting to respond promptly to community demand
- dealing with conflicting needs and priorities on the part of different sections of the community
- acknowledging that responding to the needs of the community can mean trying out approaches that may not succeed – balancing accountability with risk.

2 What strategies, approaches or ways of working can help?

3 What principles should underpin action?

Case study ## The learner-led curriculum

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Lifelong Learning Service: The Taxi Drivers' Learning Dinner

The vision is to transform the taxi-drivers' depots into neighbourhood learning centres.

This project aimed to recruit men who were reluctant to engage in learning and develop a model of good practice. Research indicated that of over 700 taxi drivers in Blackburn with Darwen, none had embraced learning. The majority are ethnic minority citizens, many of whom have extremely poor literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The non-ethnic-minority taxi drivers also commonly have below average basic skills. Through contacts with the Environmental Health Department it was found that most taxi drivers were failing newly introduced simple literacy and numeracy tests which they needed to pass for a permit.

The first step was to identify 20 operators (taxi drivers' ranks or depots) and evaluate learning needs and provision available. 'Learning champions' were recruited at each taxi depot and they promoted and helped organise a 'learning dinner' for the taxi drivers. Theirs was a key role in transferring ownership of the project from the department to the learners.

Over 250 drivers attended the Taxi Drivers' Learning Dinner. The learning champions worked with them to identify needs using a questionnaire. Basic skills and self-defence were high on the agenda.

At the dinner, it became clear that taxi drivers shared shift workers' reluctance to participate in traditionally designed courses. The way forward was to start self-defence courses at particular depots. The relevance of the course and workplace delivery overcame barriers. Six taxi drivers were targeted in the pilot, but 24 actually participated. The aim now is for every operator in the borough to have such learning opportunities.

Bilingual support was provided as was special training for tutors on the project. Developing the programme with the learners meant that the desired mix of open learning and workplace delivery could be provided. Learners decided the timing, nature, length, provider and support needs. Subjects requested included self-defence, first aid, ICT, and mechanical and vehicle awareness.

The outcomes have been positive. Taxi drivers were extremely pleased with these courses. The pass rate for the test at the Environmental Health Department has risen since the provision of these courses. It is evident from this that literacy and numeracy skills have been upgraded. Anecdotal evidence suggests that learners are now more confident and able to act as ambassadors of learning.

Evaluation takes place after each session to make sure the programme stays right for the learners. The end evaluation is undertaken as a focus group, which involves learners, tutors and coordinators, and will inform future courses.

Key lessons from the project are that we need to:

- be very specific when identifying and catering for the needs of learners
- let go of assumptions about what people need
- engage in dialogue – negotiation promotes confidence and people respond negatively to didactic approaches
- plug into existing networks and communication channels
- think of the learners as guests and offer them hospitality
- build trust by being quick to respond to requests, putting time into the process and persisting even if early attempts are rebuffed
- start by finding out what the people in the target group are already good at and focus on that rather than any 'deficits' they're supposed to have
- celebrate success – for some it will be a rare opportunity to be applauded among peers, and it raises self-esteem and encourages further achievement.

Building the curriculum

Building the curriculum means not only adding to it but also creating links and structures within it to increase the opportunities for learners. Many learners and tutors have a limited picture of the curriculum and this is partly because of the way it is presented. Learners and potential learners need to be able to see the scope of what is available, understand and use it to meet their aims. This chapter looks at how curriculum leaders can work with teams to develop relationships and structures which foster participation and progression.

Effective curriculum leadership maximises opportunities for learners to:

- get started
- make progress
- get the full benefit of the progress they make
- move on.

To do this leaders need to:

- create multiple entry points for learners
- plan for progression.

Bringing in new learners

Needs analysis, listening and willingness to try out new things all contribute to making the curriculum attractive to learners. Strategies include:

- multiple points of entry
- learning opportunities linked to current interests (eg in the media)
- a variety of learning modes and activities
- short courses and taster courses, including return to learning, some of which are accredited
- excellent guidance informed by two-way exchange of information between providers and guidance services about what is needed.

Learner pathways and progression

For many learners what began as learning for leisure has provided a route back into more formal learning

ALI (2002a)

While recognising this positive outcome for learners the ALI also found that there was insufficient information about progression opportunities, and about progression within provision and into other provision in the area. What do we mean by progression and how is it planned in ACL?

Progression is movement which results from achievement in learning. Generally, this is conceived hierarchically. Learners may progress onto higher level courses, or courses leading to qualifications or new employment or roles. Research into paths followed by adult learners by Reisenberger and Sanders indicates that while there is a pattern of movement from non-accredited into qualification courses and some movement up in terms of level, lateral progression is also important and well-qualified learners take 'lower level' courses. Boundaries between academic, adult and further education, and qualification and non-qualification bearing courses are frequently crossed and learners' motivations do not necessarily fall neatly into categories. The motivation to continue learning that meets individual needs may be as important as a hierarchical concept of progression. According to Reisenberger and Sanders (1998), the most important factors which lead to progression are:

- encouraging enthusiastic empathic teaching
- building personal and study confidence
- access to built-in advice and choice
- progression targets and opportunities.

Progression is not the same as progress. Progress is achievement in learning which can and does take place where there is continuity of learning programme. While it can be the groundwork for progression it is also an end in itself. For a discussion of progress see Turner (2001) and Nashashibi (2002). Progress can happen while learners remain in the same programme but only where there is a strategy in the organisation to ensure this, and excellent curriculum planning. Progression routes can be planned into the curriculum, or be created by learners. Carefully planned progression routes may be ignored by learners.

Adult learners have many motivations and purposes. They may want to:

- gain a sense of purpose, do 'something for me'
- bring about or respond to life changes
- extend the range of their skills, knowledge and understanding
- gain a qualification or access to further or higher learning opportunities
- engage with community issues, possibly supporting or taking on new community roles
- become eligible for work or promotion
- develop skills to contribute to family, caring and other social roles
- develop skills for freelance or future business use
- increase their involvement in the outside world, make friends and gain confidence in a group setting
- make progress in the face of health challenges or ageing by maintaining or varying their mental and / or physical activity.

Learners may combine several purposes. Their purposes may change or gradually emerge as confidence increases. Realistic progression planning depends on recognising the range of learner choices.

Moving on and staying put

Where learning develops so too do communities of learners. Some learning communities are essentially communities of passage but ACL meets the needs of continuing learners as well as providing opportunities for learners to gain what they need and move on. We often talk of the social benefits and motivations of adult learners as if they are separate from learning goals. But taking part in the discourse of learning together is, for many people, part of both the process and the pleasure of learning.

Progress in learning implies change and growth but these can be enjoyed communally, long term and in the same place. Learning does not always have to be justified in terms of something else, although its spin-offs for individuals, families and communities may be many and varied. Where there is a rich and diverse open access programme, having a stable core of learners makes it possible to maintain and grow the curriculum and to develop areas of excellence. On the other hand, if the proportion of continuing learners in programme areas or classes is too high or there is a lack of provision which attracts new learners the learning community becomes static.

It is part of the curriculum leadership role to foster mobility and challenge within the non-accredited curriculum. Learners need to find it easy to move between programmes and groups and create pathways which are meaningful to them. Having too many continuing learners on programmes poses challenges for curriculum management.

Figure 2 Continuity of learners: advantages and disadvantages

	Up side	Down side
For managers	Stability for business planning Confidence that courses will run Happy long-term customers	Tutors operate as loners, use their own resources and have their following Provision is difficult to change or move Classes collapse when tutors leave It is difficult to maintain real beginner opportunities Groups become increasingly homogeneous (eg all retired)
For continuing learners	The class and its time and place are part of the rhythm of their lives They build networks of mutual support They help plan the next course The level of work rises with them	They may not realise how much progress they have made They may become dependent on the tutor They may experience a limited range of approaches to the subject and limited learning styles
For potential learners	They may join an established and supportive group Experienced learners may encourage and help beginners	The true level of the course may be higher than the course description suggests They may be unable to enrol If they join, they may feel uncomfortable and 'out of it'

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Management solutions include developing such classes into affiliated groups or, more radically, changing their time or venue and being prepared for the opposition this will raise. Curriculum leadership offers the alternative strategy of engaging the tutor in development work, drawing on the group's strengths and bringing about incremental change. Curriculum leaders may work with tutors and teams to:

- develop more active learning styles
- develop good practice in formative assessment and giving feedback
- introduce ways of recognising and celebrating learners' achievement outside the classes
- plan the curriculum in cycles so that, after a certain period, learners realise that 'This is where I came in'.

Planning for progression

Thinking about how adults use the curriculum challenges assumptions about the learning process. It may be helpful to think of two different models of progression.

Figure 3 The learning ladder and learning lattice

The learning ladder

Starting	Continuing	Moving on
Lower level courses Informal learning	Higher level courses Qualification courses	Progression to further or higher education / training Progression to employment

The learning lattice

Starting	Continuing	Moving on
Entry at any level Formal or informal learning Qualification or non-accredited learning	Developing specialisms Consolidating or deepening learning Qualification or non-accredited learning	Leadership roles within the learning community Local voluntary work and community involvements Learning with other providers Starting new subjects

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How can curriculum leaders facilitate progression?

Making progression routes work in practice rather than on paper depends on human contact as much as on curriculum design. Linking courses into programmes, or enhancing the offer in an area of learning by a programme of outings or exhibitions, makes integrated curriculum development possible and contributes to the creation of a community of learners with a sense of shared endeavour and identity. For some providers creating a modular curriculum with unitised assessment is a natural extension of this which takes advantage of the obvious fit between a modular programme and adult learners' modes and patterns of study.

Key elements in planning for progression are:

- having a curriculum structure which tutors and learners understand
- having clear information to enable learners to plan their programmes
- promoting active learning and recognising achievement
- developing good practice in assessment and giving feedback
- offering provision at more than one level
- devising 'bridging' courses to facilitate the move into mainstream provision from Entry level or courses for adults with learning difficulties or disabilities
- linking related subjects
- offering qualifications within progression routes which match learners' styles and are valued by tutors and learners
- recognising the need for breadth and consolidation of learning and skills – learners cannot always progress from a Level 2 to a Level 3 course in one step
- developing contacts and compacts with other institutions.

Working with levels

ACL programmes often include provision at Entry level and Levels 1, 2 and 3, although much provision is multi-level. Deciding on the level of a course may be fairly easy – beginners, intermediate and advanced are familiar terms in adult education programmes, but it can be challenging. A focus on progression brings with it a focus on levels.

Progression routes may start from non-accredited learning and move through qualifications outside the NQF such as Open College Network awards, to qualifications within it. But learners who are on progression 'ladders' may still move between accredited and non-accredited courses. This is particularly important when courses have only a small number of taught hours and learners need to consolidate learning before moving up a level. Having a good understanding of levels is essential to planning progression but this does not mean that mixed groups discourage progression. There are three senses in which mixed groups bring together learners with different levels of prior learning and skills:

- the group includes highly qualified and skilled learners such as graduates and learners with few qualifications of any kind
- the group includes beginners in the subject and people with advanced skills or learning in the subject
- the group includes those who interact confidently in a group and those who lack confidence.

These overlap in any combination and we know that learners work very well in groups which bring together highly qualified learners and people with few qualifications on the basis of a shared interest. The pre-eminence of oral learning is one of the complex of features which, taken together, distinguish ACL from other sectors. It is why mixed and multi-level groups are so often successful. It is part of the way adult learners bring themselves and their experience to learning. This applies at all levels of learning and across subject boundaries. Developing a mutually supportive community of learners is one of the skills of the tutor who sees herself or himself as a learner within an adult and self-motivated group. What is the purpose of seeking to identify levels within such provision?

Being able to describe levels of learning is useful whether to develop courses at different levels or to help the tutor plan effectively for mixed groups so that all learners are challenged and able to give of their best.

This ability to differentiate is useful because:

- it helps learners climb the ladder and gain qualifications
- it helps learners describe what they have achieved and be clear what they are working towards, even if they do not think in terms of levels
- it engages tutors in analysis of the learning taking place
- it helps tutors set challenging but achievable goals
- it increases tutors' clarity about what they are assessing and learners are achieving and therefore increases their confidence
- it helps tutors tailor learning activities to the needs of individuals within groups – differentiation.

Staff development exercise

What level is it?

For curriculum leaders and tutors

Aim To help curriculum leaders and tutors clarify what they mean by levels and extend the range of methods they use to help learners make progress and prepare for higher level learning.

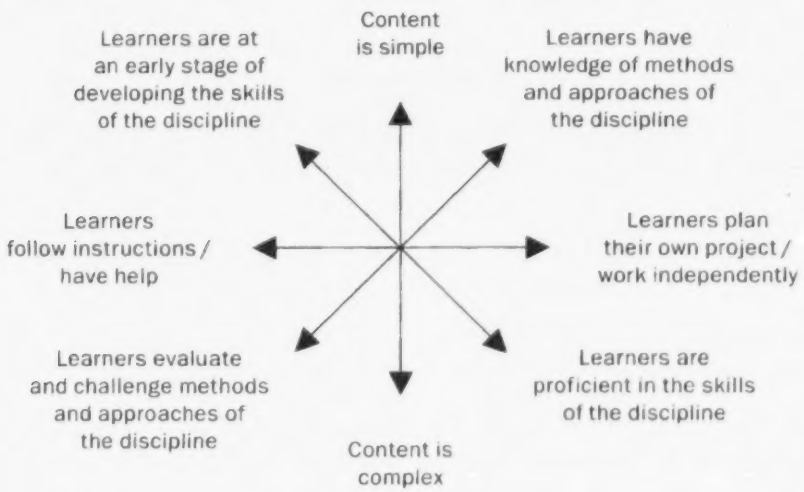
Thinking about your subject(s) and learners, consider each of the lines in the star diagram as a continuum and draw dots on the lines to reflect either **a** or **b**.

a what happens in courses at different levels

b the level that an individual may be working at in a mixed class.

Join up the dots and compare and discuss the patterns that have been produced.

Star diagram


Content is simple
Learners have knowledge of methods and approaches of the discipline
Learners are at an early stage of developing the skills of the discipline
Learners follow instructions / have help
Learners plan their own project / work independently
Learners evaluate and challenge methods and approaches of the discipline
Learners are proficient in the skills of the discipline
Content is complex

Approaches to curriculum leadership

We have looked at what curriculum leaders have to do and what their priorities and roles can be. This chapter explores how they can develop their range of leadership skills and styles.

Describing successful curriculum leadership in FE colleges, Jones and Anderson (2001, p7) assert:

Good curriculum areas tend to have an effective middle manager – a specialist in their field, who leads from the front by setting an example of hard work, flexibility, responsiveness and commitment.

In ACL both middle managers and curriculum specialists who lead teams are thin on the ground. As LEAs respond to the CIF, the identification of 14 areas of learning and feedback from the pilot inspections, many have reviewed their staffing. There is now a trend towards the appointment of more full-time or fractional leadership posts in curriculum leadership. Some posts relate to curriculum areas catering for large numbers of learners such as languages, creative arts and crafts. Several areas of learning may be represented in a curriculum team. Some curriculum leaders have no line-management responsibility and face the challenge of working across vertical management structures and finding people, managers or tutors, who will take forward curriculum development.

Even where there are no formal posts there may be experienced tutors who are:

- taking a lead in developing teaching and learning methodologies
- designing and / or evaluating learning materials and resources
- sharing their practice with colleagues
- keeping an eye on developments in their areas of interest and expertise.

These people influence their colleagues and bring about development and change, so exercising leadership. In ACL, being a curriculum leader is not always linked to having a formal position within a management structure.

What is 'leadership'?

Although there are many views about this, there seems to be agreement that leadership is about hearts and minds, and that:

- leadership is a process of influencing others
- leadership can be exercised by people without formal authority or designation
- leadership implies that there are followers
- leadership involves moving forward to achieve goals or objectives.

There is also consensus that leadership is different from management. Leadership activity may be seen as the exercise of influence to move an organisation forward, whereas management activity is more concerned with setting up and maintaining systems and structures. However, in practice the two are complementary. Most leaders have some management functions and good managers benefit from being good leaders.

In ACL the concept of followers can be problematic. Many tutors are accustomed to working on their own, developing all their own resources and recruiting their learners. A curriculum leader is likely to have a new and immature team which includes very experienced people but has not developed common goals and established ways of working. The challenge will be to develop the team in a non-hierarchical but effective way and adapt methods to bring the best out of individuals.

In summary, leadership is associated with the ability of an individual to influence others to work together effectively to achieve common goals.

How do leaders exercise leadership?

Individuals' leadership styles depend on their background, experience, personal characteristics and values. There is broad agreement as to key activities which are central to effective leadership. These are:

- vision building and securing commitment
- the development of culture and climate / ethos which is conducive to the achievement of the vision
- building and maintaining effective relationships with and between people.

Leadership skills and competencies

The Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) standards identify management activities and leadership competencies, emphasising the need to develop personal attributes such as the ability to motivate and influence others. The skills leaders need relate to the key activity areas and include those learned and developed through practice as well as interpersonal skills which reflect values and attitudes.

Leaders need to be able to:

- develop and articulate a vision of what the future, or 'success', looks like
- develop a sense of purpose and set the direction
- set high expectations of self and others
- be an example or role model
- communicate effectively – including active listening
- gain support and commitment – 'buy in' or 'sign up'
- see and bring out the best in people
- give feedback and support, affirm and challenge
- develop supportive relationships
- be proactive in relation to change – be a 'change agent'
- consult and develop shared decision-making processes
- make decisions and take responsibility when the situation requires this.

Concepts of leadership

Of the many concepts of leadership which are available, some have particular relevance to curriculum leadership. A curriculum leader may be one of the following (or combine two or more roles):

- a leading practitioner with specialist expertise
- a motivator and provider of inspiration
- an enabler or facilitator
- the person who makes sure the job gets done.

The curriculum leader may operate most effectively from the position of 'first among equals' or 'lead practitioner', identifying and sharing effective practice or embedding new teaching and learning strategies and support systems.

Given the task of creating the right climate to lead a team who are going to establish a new learning centre or undertake a major community arts project, an emphasis on motivating and inspiring the team might serve well. People who occupy the role of 'champions' for particular curriculum innovations or new teaching and learning methodologies may also find this approach relevant. It is useful when you need 'the ability to get ordinary people to do extraordinary things'.

Operating as a facilitator and enabler may be the most productive approach when what is to be achieved depends on consultation, shared decision-making and ownership of goals and action plans. This participative approach to leadership can result in:

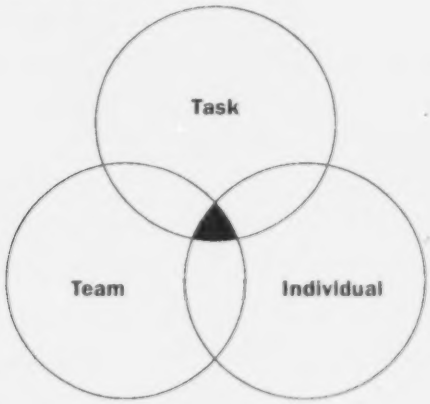
- better quality decision-making processes and decisions
- a higher degree of consensus and ownership
- team development
- conflict resolution.

This type of leadership may be particularly relevant in developing quality assurance and improvement frameworks and processes, or taking forward multi-agency projects involving partnership work.

Where the emphasis is on 'getting the job done' a managerial approach will be needed, so that everyone knows what their role is and what is expected of them. Where there is a strong emphasis on the achievement of tasks the leader's role is to balance the need to develop the team, achieve the tasks and support individuals.

All three are essential. This may be expressed as shown in the diagram below (after Adair 1998, p44):

Figure 4 Getting the balance right



This approach is useful for curriculum leaders when leading projects or taking responsibility for self-assessment reports for an area of learning, whatever their preferred way of working with colleagues.

The 'leadership toolkit'

In practice, no single approach to leadership will be appropriate in all circumstances. Different situations require different responses. People who exercise leadership need to develop a 'leadership toolkit' – a range of skills and practices, styles and approaches which can be adopted as necessary. This could be seen as a 'common sense' approach to leadership. The leader makes a judgement as to what would be 'fit for purpose' in a given situation. Being flexible in this way should not mean being inconsistent in terms of principles or values. Adopting a 'contingent' approach can be the most productive way of operating – and may be an essential survival strategy.

Staff development exercise

Dealing with challenges

For curriculum and team leaders

Aim To help curriculum leaders anticipate challenges, share experience and develop strategies and a problem-solving approach.

Think about the kinds of situations curriculum leaders may need to deal with. Three examples are given and you will be able to suggest others. What leadership response would be appropriate? What would you do and what skills would you need?

Task sheet

Situation	Leadership approach, activities and skills
You discover that, despite your efforts, one of your tutor team has not completed any of the required records of learner progress or course reviews. The tutor explains that these are irrelevant to learning...	
After a disappointing lesson observation grade an experienced tutor has asked you for your help with a mixed-ability class. The subject area is quite specialised and you are no expert...	
You have received a complaint from two learners that the topics and materials used in a course are 'Eurocentric'...	
Your examples...	

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Effective curriculum leadership

A curriculum leader may have to mediate between what tutors and learners consider worthwhile and what strategic managers deem necessary. The leader may need to act as advocate for the tutor team, and perhaps learners, for example if controversial changes are introduced, perhaps with little preparation time.

In the normal course of events curriculum leaders will function as:

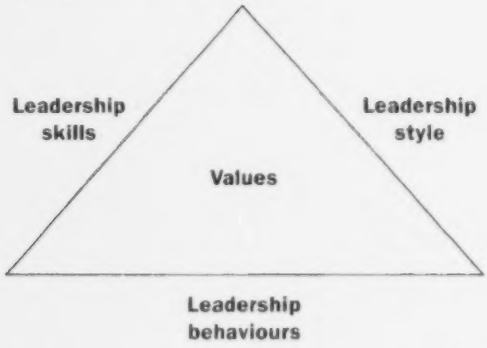
- problem-solvers
- decision-takers (others may contribute to decision-making)
- negotiators and brokers
- coaches, mentors and role models.

The relevant qualifications and expertise are baseline requirements. What makes a real difference to success for individuals and organisations are individual, personal qualities (sometimes referred to as 'soft skills'). Curriculum leaders need self-awareness, empathy, motivation, and the ability to manage themselves and their emotions and to relate to others effectively. Leadership is not about 'being nice' – it may be necessary to be frank in confronting someone with an uncomfortable truth about her or his behaviour. Nor is it about 'letting it all hang out' emotionally, or giving free rein to feelings. It is about acknowledging and managing feelings, expressing them appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together to achieve shared goals.

Curriculum leaders will also need to review their key values in the context of the CIF, and in the context of the stated and 'lived' values of the organisation or service. They will need to identify and resolve any areas which could cause them difficulty or inner conflict – if this does not happen, others, for example the tutor team, will pick up the dissonance. The curriculum leader may need to challenge the degree of match between the declared and lived values of the service, or contribute to a review of the organisations' key values as they impact on learner experience and success.

Finally, curriculum leaders will need to consider how to communicate values to the team, and explore how the team will embody them in their work together. The triangle below shows in simple form how leadership skills, style and behaviours have an impact on values.

Figure 5 Embodying values in practice



There are no 'quick fixes' on how to be effective as a curriculum leader. The extent to which this is possible depends in part on the culture, structure and systems in place in an organisation. Leadership style, which is related to personality and experience, will influence how a curriculum leader operates. All three aspects of leadership are determined by values.

Checklist for curriculum leaders

Key

A We are very confident about this and have established good practice

B We haven't done much on this yet, but we know what we need to do and how to go about it

C We still need to do a lot of work on this

	A	B	C
Curriculum design and development			
1 We know who is, and who is not, participating in our provision and how far this profile reflects the communities we serve			
2 We have a coherent strategy for widening participation and building community capacity through learning			
3 We have effective arrangements for consulting with community groups, and potential learners, about their interests and needs			
4 We can review our curriculum in areas of learning, through wider subject groupings or by themes such as family learning			
5 We plan our programmes to be educationally and socially inclusive and to provide equality of opportunity and access			
6 Our curriculum is relevant to local social, economic and cultural contexts and the interests of learners and potential learners			
7 We have progression routes between basic skills, ESOL and 'first rung' provision and further learning, employment or involvement in the community			
8 We ensure that information about our learning opportunities and where these can lead is clear and accessible			
9 Our provision includes activities through which learners can enhance their learning beyond their chosen subject or skill area			
10 Our learning programmes make a significant contribution to wider participation and community development			

	A	B	C
Teaching, learning, assessment and resources			
1 We use teaching methods which are participatory, interactive, practical and creative, and which involve critical thinking, problem-solving and shared decision-making			
2 We offer accreditation and qualifications, and we have sensitive and manageable arrangements for recording learning gain			
3 All our staff and volunteers are committed to widening participation and empowering local people, and have the necessary interpersonal skills and awareness of equality issues			
4 We value and build on participants' experience and skills and encourage self-confidence and learner autonomy			
5 We promote equality of opportunity and challenge disability discrimination, ageism, sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice			
6 All our staff have opportunities to share good practice and to participate in relevant staff development and training			
7 We negotiate individual learning programmes and outcomes and, where appropriate, collective learning goals with learners			
8 Our assessment methods are sensitive to the needs of individual adults and groups, and reflect the contexts in which adults learn			
9 The materials and equipment we use are of good quality, up to date, age / gender / ethnicity appropriate, and sufficient			
10 The venues we use are accessible, welcoming and safe, and appropriately resourced, including ICT			
Partnership working			
1 We liaise with key agencies to meet learners' needs and make best use of community premises and facilities			
2 We work effectively with community and voluntary organisations and groups, and identify and support local learning champions and brokers			
3 We are clear about the difference between networking, forming alliances, working in association – and partnership			
4 We have arrangements to make sure all partners know what is expected and required of them, and what they are committed to and responsible for			
5 When we undertake projects we ensure that there are proper arrangements for steering, managing and monitoring them			
6 Where we subcontract we have documentation in place such as service-level agreements and memoranda of understanding			
7 We ensure that learners, partners and other community agencies have a voice in evaluating our provision and services			
8 We have developed ways, with partners, of evaluating impact			

Appendix 1 Curriculum leadership and the Common Inspection Framework (CIF)

What does the CIF have to say about curriculum-related leadership and / or management?

All seven key questions of the CIF have implications for curriculum leadership.

Question 5 'How well do the programmes and courses meet the needs and interests of learners?' is particularly useful for curriculum leaders when they are looking at the provision as a whole.

Key questions 1, 2 and 4 are concerned with learners' achievements, the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and assessment and monitoring of learners' progress. Questions 3 and 6 deal with resources and support services for learners and prospective learners. Question 7 focuses mainly on managerial and functional aspects and many of its evaluative statements can be applied to the curriculum.

What do we know about ALI inspectors' perceptions of curriculum leadership and management in ACL?

The ALI pilot and early inspections identified a lack of attention on the part of ACL providers to curriculum management (as compared with leadership). Many of the providers had few full-time or established fractional staff and those staff were considered by inspectors to have provided an overview of the curriculum rather than curriculum management or leadership.

Other aspects commented on by inspectors include:

- insufficient subject support to tutors
- arrangements to assure quality are underdeveloped
- too few mechanisms to review the whole curriculum and plan to broaden its range
- some self-assessment lacks critical judgement
- providers found it difficult to self-assess by area of learning when there was no direct management of the curriculum
- course development may be determined by tutors' expertise rather than learner or potential learner needs / interests

- limited opportunities to share good practice (particularly in rural areas)
- where tutors got together to discuss the curriculum, learning and assessment was noticeably better
- inadequate staff development, which was holding back improvement and change
- some tutors employed to deliver the curriculum did not have appropriate qualifications
- some teaching practices were dated and inappropriate, with lack of focus on the individual and not enough monitoring of learners' progress
- data was not used to evaluate performance or plan development
- lesson observation was generally focused on tutors' development and support needs or performance, rather than learning.

ALI (2002a) and ALI (2003)

Wider issues

Some local authorities did not appear to have a clear overview of the range of ACL provided across local authority departments (eg through community development services or the library service). There were varying levels of support for the adult learning service within LEAs.

Inspectors also identified:

- strength in relationships between managers and a range of partners in order to widen participation and gain access to facilities and resources / share resources
- some good examples of innovative approaches to widening participation.

ALI (2002a)

Guidance on curriculum leadership and what it means in practice

The revised *Guidance for providers on the inspection of adult and community learning* (ALI 2002b) is a valuable source of clarification and interpretation. For example:

- there are examples of achievement which acknowledge the learning gain that may take place through participation in community development activities
- the value of learning skills which can help people operate effectively in a learning group is recognised
- the need for equitable treatment when it comes to resourcing learning is made clear
- the importance of understanding the anxieties that adults may have when returning to learning, and the diversity of adult learners' backgrounds, are spelled out
- the importance of negotiating learning programmes and goals with individuals is emphasised
- qualifications are seen as intended to add value to learning, not constrain it
- the contribution that learning can make to social cohesion, community well-being, and the development of social capital and community infrastructures, as well as the economic well-being of communities, is asserted.

This document should prove a useful resource for those seeking to achieve the objectives of widening participation through developing an inclusive curriculum and range of services for learners. However, curriculum leaders will need to consider how they can gather evidence of the wider impact of learning on communities.

Appendix 2 North East Lincolnshire Community Learning Service Area of Learning file

Please include the following in your Area of Learning file:

- List of staff within area and their courses.
- Copies of curriculum induction sheets for new staff.
- Proposed observation schedule, ticked when done. (Reports and grading cannot be included because of confidentiality.)
- Area of Learning Report included in SAR. Please also add any background paperwork showing how you researched (eg completed Handout 5 from ACL QSP 'Self-assessment and development planning' flexi-learning disk).
- Agendas and minutes from curriculum meetings.
- Accreditation syllabuses.
- Schemes of work.
- Resources lists and prioritised list for new resources.
- Documentation from any specific projects.
- External verifier reports or other external reports.
- Any photographs or other evidence of practice or an indication of where such evidence is located.

References and further reading

Note

Backup material for this booklet and others in the series can be found on www.qualityACL.org.uk

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Useful websites

www.ali.gov.uk

www.basic-skills.co.uk

www.lsc.gov.uk

www.LSDA.org.uk

www.niace.org.uk

www.qualityACL.org.uk

www.rqa.org.uk

adult and community learning
quality support programme

How are decisions taken about the curriculum in adult and community learning and how is it reviewed and developed? The range and balance of the offer varies widely, typically including open access learning opportunities for individuals and groups, targeted provision that aims to widen participation or focus on essential skills, and community development work.

This guide is for managers and curriculum leaders who need to take a strategic approach to the curriculum and build internal organisation and partnerships. It looks at the part curriculum leadership can play in developing and delivering high quality learning programmes which match the needs and interests of local adults, engage the excluded, and provide pathways for progression. The guide includes a section on techniques for effective curriculum leadership.

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